St. Arsenios of Cappadocia: BLESSING-PSALTER
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THE PSALTER AS A BOOK OF NEEDS, according to the usage of St. Arsenios of Cappadocia, as transmitted by the Athonite Elder Paisios, translated for the St. Pachomius Library by Vassilios Kollias, edited by Karen Rae Keck.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Saint Arsenios used to use the Psalms for blessings, especialy when there was no prescribed blessing for a particular occasion. Here in Part One is the correspondence between the psalms and different occasions. The original Greek list can be found in -O Geron Paisios- by the Hieromonk Christodoulos, Agion Oros, 1994. In Part Two, we have provided a (rather poor) index; perhaps someone else would care to fashion a better.

Apart from all religious considerations, this "Book of Needs" is a fascinating portrait of village life in Anatolia at the beginning of the Twentieth Century: whether it reflects more the "longue duree" of Byzantine history or the particular difficulties of St. Arsenios' time we do not feel well enough informed even to speculate. There is certainly no idealization of rural conditions here: particularly noteworthy is the extreme concern for alleviating psychological as well as physical pain, and the

mention of what we would nowadays call "post-traumatic stress disorder".

To us, at least, the exact reasoning behind the saint's choice of a particular psalm for a given need is not always obvious; perhaps this is by design, to encourage close reflection on the words. Orthodoxy is not magic, and a document like this one is not an endorsement of "peasant superstition"; it is rather a channel through which the Love of God can enter into every aspect of human society.

PART ONE: A LIST OF PSALMS FOR USE AS BLESSINGS, ARRANGED BY ORDER IN THE PSALTER:

[IMPORTANT NOTE: The FIRST number is the number of the psalm in the Greek Septuagint Bible. The SECOND number is the number of the psalm found in the Masoretic text and in most English language Bibles, such as the King James!]

1 (1) When a tree or a vine is planted, so that it may bring forth fruit.

2 (2) So that God illumines those who go to meetings and councils.

3 (3) So that badness goes away from people, so that they do not torment unjustly their fellows.

4 (4) So that God heals the sensitive people who fell ill from depression because of the behaviour of hard-hearted people.

5 (5) So that God heals the wounded eyes that were bitten by a bad person.

6 (6) So that God frees the person who has been under a spell.

7 (7) For those who got damaged from fear, from the terrors and the intimidations of bad people.

8 (8) For those who are hurt by demons or by perverse people.

9 (9 & 10) So that the demons stop tormenting you in sleep or with fancies during the day.

10 (11) For hard-hearted couples that argue and divorce (when the hard-hearted man or woman torments their sensitive wife or husband).

11 (12) For mentally ill people who have badness and harm others.

12 (13) For those who suffer from their liver.

13 (14) For a terrible demon, continually three times a day for three days.

14 (15) So that robbers or thieves change their mind and return having done no harm, and having repented.

15 (16) So that the key is found when it is lost.

16 (17) For a grave and unjust accusation, three times a day for three days.
17 (18) When there is an earthquake or other natural disaster, or devastating rain with lightning.

18 (19) So that women give birth successfully.

19 (20) For the couples who for medical reasons cannot have children, so that God heals them and that they do not divorce.

20 (21) So that God softens the hearts of the rich and they give alms to the poor.

21 (22) So that God contains the fire, so that no big harm happens.

22 (23) So that God makes milder the very rebellious children that bring sorrow to their parents.

23 (24) So that the door opens when the key is lost.

24 (25) For people who temptation troubles a lot and so brings continual problems into their lives, making them lose their peace and complain.

25 (26) When somebody asks something good from God so that He gives it without the person getting harmed.

26 (27) So that God protects the peasants from the enemy army, so that they do not harm the people or their fields.

27 (28) So that God heals those who suffer from illnesses of nervous or mental origin.
28 (29) For those that the sea makes sick and who are afraid of the rough sea.

29 (30) For those that are in danger far away, in the territory of barbarous and unbelieving people, so that God guards them and illumines the people there to become peaceful and to come to know God.

30 (31) So that God gives enough grain and fruit when the weather is not good for agriculture.

31 (32) So that the travelers find their way when they are lost and suffering from it.

32 (33) So that God reveals the truth to those who were unjustly imprisoned, and so that they are set free.

33 (34) For those on the edge of death, when they are tormented by demons. Or, for the enemy army when it brings danger and enters the borders with ominous intentions.

34 (35) So that God frees the good people from the traps of the bad people, who take advantage of the people of God.

35 (36) So that animosity disappears completely after arguments and misunderstandings.

36 (37) For people badly wounded by criminals.

37 (38) When the jaws have pain coming from rotten teeth.

38 (39) So that the people who are abandoned and depressed find work, so that they stop being in sorrow.

39 (40) So that the love between employer and employee comes back when there has been exchange of heavy words.

40 (41) So that women give birth with success when the child comes prematurely into the world.

41 (42) For young people when they get ill from falling in love, and one person gets wounded and is in sorrow.

42 (43) So that the people get free from the prisons of an enemy nation.

43 (44) So that God reveals the truth to couples when there has been a misunderstanding, so that they come into mutual peace and love again.

44 (45) For those who suffer from heart or kidneys.

45 (46) For the young people that the enemy because of envy prevents from making a family (i.e. from getting married).

46 (47) So that the employee or the employer find peace, when the employee leaves offended by the employer, and so that the employee finds work.

47 (48) When gangs of criminals go robbing and grave disasters are happening: to be continually read for 40 days.

48 (49) For those who do a dangerous job.
49 (50) So that the people who are far from God repent and return to God and are saved.

50 (51) When, because of our sins and in order to correct us, comes the punishment of God (epidemics of illness and deaths for people or animals).

51 (52) So that the hard-hearted masters repent and become compassionate and do not torment the people.

52 (53) So that God blesses the nets and they get filled with fish.

53 (54) So that God illumines the rich people that have bought slaves so that they free them.

54 (55) So that the name of a family that had been unjustly accused is restored.

55 (56) For sensitive people, whose souls have been wounded by their fellows.

56 (57) For those people who suffer headaches coming from big sorrow.

57 (58) So that things come in a helping way for those who work with good intention, so that God prevents every perverse action of demons or crooked people.

58 (59) For those that cannot speak, that God gives them the ability to speak.

59 (60) So that God reveals the truth when a whole group of people is unjustly accused.

60 (61) For those that have trouble in their work either because of laziness or because of fear.

61 (62) So that God relieves from troubles the person who is weak, so that he is not dominated by the urge to complain.

62 (63) So that fields and trees bring forth fruit when the water is limited.

63 (64) When a person is bitten by a dog or wolf that had rabies. (He was also for giving them blessed water to drink).

64 (65) So that merchants prosper, so that they do not speak too much and take advantage of simple people.

65 (66) So that the evil one does not bring obstacles in the homes and cause families to be in sorrow.

66 (67) So that the places where hens are raised are blessed.

67 (68) So that the women whose pregnancies fail manage to endure and become healthy.

68 (69) When there is severe rain and the rivers overflow, taking with them people and houses.

69 (70) For sensitive people that get sad from little things and come to despair, that God gives them strength.

70 (71) For deserted people who become uninteresting to others [**lit. "boring"**] because of the devil's envy and come to despair, that they may find mercy and healing from God.

71 (72) So that God blesses the gatherings of the new agricultural production that the peasants bring home.

72 (73) So that the criminals repent.

73 (74) So that God protects the peasants that work in their fields when the enemy have surrounded the village.

74 (75) So that the barbarous employer becomes peaceful and does not torment his fellow human beings, the employees.

75 (76) For a mother who is scared during her giving birth, so that God gives her braveness and protects her.

76 (77) When there is no mutual understanding between parents and children, that God illumines them, so that the children listen to the parents and the parents show love.

77 (78) So that God illumines those who lend so that they do not press their fellows for their debt, and so that they are compassionate.

78 (79) So that God protects the villages from the robbing and stealing of the enemy army.

79 (80) So that God cures a person whose face gets swollen and all his head is in pain.

80 (81) So that God takes care of the poor who are in need and sorrow and are depressed because of poverty.

81 (82) So that people buy the products of the peasants, so that the peasants are not sad and depressed.

82 (83) So that God prevents the bad people who want to do murders.

83 (84) So that God preserves all that is kept in the house, and the animals, and the products of the producers.

84 (85) So that God heals those who were wounded by robbers and moreover got psychologically damaged from terror.

85 (86) So that God saves the world when plague comes and people die.

86 (87) So that God extends the lives of those members of the family that are still urgently needed by the rest of the family.

87 (88) So that God protects all those who have no protector and are suffering from hard-hearted fellows.

88 (89) So that God gives strength to those who easily fall sick and are physically weak, so that they can work without getting tired and depressed.

89 (90) So that God brings rain when there is a drought, or that the wells bring forth water again if they have stopped doing so.

90 (91) So that the devil disappears when he appears in front of a person and brings him terror.

91 (92) So that God gives prudence to people so that they progress spiritually.

92 (93) So that God protects the ship when it is in great danger at sea. (He was also for throwing blessed water at the four corners of the ship).

93 (94) So that God illumines the disorderly people who cause problems to the nation and bring commotion to the people, causing trouble by disorder and divisions.

94 (95) So that no spells cause couples to start finding reasons for arguments and fights.

95 (96) So that God gives to the deaf people the ability to hear.

96 (97) So that spells go away from people.

97 (98) So that God gives comfort for those who are in sorrow so that they stop being depressed.

98 (99) So that God blesses and gives grace to those young people who want to leave everything and follow God. [**I do not know how successful is my translation here. To my**

**Greek ear the exact phrase that is used would make me think of people who follow the monastic life but I am not sure. --Trans.**]

99 (100) So that God blesses and makes real the desires of the people that are in accordance with His will.

100 (101) So that God gives graces and talents to the good and simple people.

101 (102) So that God blesses the people who hold offices of power so that they help the people with kindness and understanding.

102 (103) So that the monthly flow of blood comes to a woman when it is delayed.

103 (104) So that God blesses the possessions of the people that they are not sad and depressed, but glorify God.

104 (105) So that people repent and confess their sins.

105 (106) So that God gives illumination to people so that they do not move away from the way to salvation.

106 (107) So that God gives the woman who could not give birth the ability to do so.

107 (108) So that God humbles the enemies, so that they change their bad intentions.

108 (109) So that God cures the epileptics. Or, so that God has mercy on those who accuse unjustly and they repent.

109 (110) So that the younger have respect for the older.

110 (111) So that the unjust judges repent and judge justly the people of God.

111 (112) So that God protects the soldiers when they go to war.

112 (113) So that God gives blessings to the poor widow, so that she pays her debts and is saved from going to prison.

113 (114 & 115) So that God cures the mentally retarded children.

114 (116:1-9) So that God gives blessings and comfort to the sad poor little children, so that they are not looked down upon by the children of the rich and consequently feel depressed.

115 (116:10-19) So that God cures the horrible passion of lying.

116 (117) So that families keep unity and love and glorify God.

117 (118) So that God humbles the barbarians when they surround the village and bring fear, and that He reverses their bad intentions.

118 (119) So that God shatters the barbarians and humbles their action when they slay innocent women and children.

119 (120) So that God gives patience and forbearance to those people who have to live together with crooked and unjust people.

120 (121) So that God protects the slaves from the hands of the enemy so that they are not mutilated before they are set free.

121 (122) So that God cures those who suffer from the "evil eye."

122 (123) So that God gives eyesight to the blind and cures the eyes that are in pain.

123 (124) So that God protects people from snakes, so that they do not bite.

124 (125) So that God protects the fields of the just people from the bad people.

125 (126) So that God cures the people who suffer from continual headaches.

126 (127) So that God brings peace to a family when there are arguments.

127 (128) So that the badness of the enemy never approaches the homes, and that there is the peace and blessing of God in the family.

128 (129) So that God cures the people who suffer from migraines, or, so that God shows mercy to the hard and indiscreet people who bring sorrow to the sensitive.

129 (130) So that God gives braveness and hope to those who start a new job and do not know it well yet, so that they do not find extreme difficulty in their work.

130 (131) So that God gives repentance and comfort with hope to people so that they are saved.

131 (132) So that God shows pity to the world when because of our sins there are continual wars.

132 (133) So that God illumines the nations and they become friendly and the people find peace.

133 (134) So that God protects people from every danger.
134 (135) So that people concentrate at the time of prayer and their mind is united with God.

135 (136) So that God protects the immigrants when they abandon their homes and leave so that they are saved from the barbarians.

136 (137) So that God brings steadiness to the person with unsteady character.

137 (138) So that God illumines the masters of the place so that people's requests are treated with understanding.

138 (139) So that God stops the temptation of sensitive people by blasphemous thoughts.

139 (140) So that God makes peaceful the head of the family who has a very difficult character and brings suffering to all the family.

140 (141) So that God makes peaceful the barbarian master of a place who torments his fellows.

141 (142) So that God makes peaceful the rebel who is doing bad; then even if he is a Kurd he becomes a lamb. [**St. Arsenios was living in Asia Minor. Kurds, who were often soldiers, had a reputation among other ethnic groups for being brutal fighters. -- Trans.**]

142 (143) So that God protects the mother throughout the pregnancy so that she does not loose the child.

143 (144) So that God pacifies the people when they are in unrest so that no civil war happens.

144 (145) So that God blesses the work of people so that it is well accepted by God.

145 (146) So that God stops the flow of blood from people who suffer from it.

146 (147:1-11) So that God heals the people who have been bitten and wounded in the jaws by bad people.

147 (147:12-20) So that God brings peace to the wild animals so that they do not harm people or farm produce.

148 (148) So that God makes the weather appropriate so that people have plenty and glorify God.

[**These were from St. Arsenios. The following to are from Fr. Paisios of the Holy Mountain**.]

149 (149) From gratefulness and thankfulness to God for His many kindnesses and for the plenitude of His love, that knows no limit and bears with us.

150 (150) So that God gives happiness and comfort to our sad brothers and sisters who are in far places, and to those of our brothers and sisters who are sleeping and are even farther away. Amen.

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PART TWO: TOPICAL INDEX

[**IMPORTANT NOTE: Only the Septuagint psalm number is given in this index.**]

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Have mercy, O Lord, upon Thy servants the Hieromonk Christodoulos, the translator Vassilios, and Karen.
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THE END, AND TO GOD BE THE GLORY!
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